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# TRANS TRAVEL TIPS

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Most airports now use a combination of walk-through or hand-held metal detectors, physical searches, Explosive Trace Detection, and full-body scanning technology as a primary or secondary method of security screening for passengers. For many trans and gender variant travellers, this raises particular concerns regarding privacy, human rights and discrimination. With these concerns in mind, this resource offers information about your rights as an airline traveller, tips to assist in navigating the ticketing and screening process, information about what to expect from security checkpoints, and suggested steps to take if you feel that your rights have been breached. Keep in mind, this resource is intended to provide a broad overview, and should not be treated as legal advice. ECHRT does not provide legal advice or legal assistance. If you require the assistance of a lawyer, free legal assistance is available at many of the legal clinics across the country.

## 1. Identification

Before you fly, consider using e-tickets, online check-ins, and self-serve kiosks in order to reduce the number of times you are required to show your identification to airport personnel. In addition to allowing you to move more quickly to your gate, these procedures may help minimize the opportunities for identification to be misunderstood.

When making your airline reservations, **it is very important to make sure that the name on your ID matches the name on your airline reservation or boarding pass.** However, small differences should not cause significant issues or delays, including:

- no middle name, or use of a middle initial instead of a full middle name
- use of hyphens and/or apostrophes

If your [photo identification](#) does not reflect your current physical appearance, **update your photograph and ID as soon as you can.** If this is not possible prior to travel, it is advisable to carry a letter from a physician or therapist explaining the difference.

### a. Suggested Supplemental Information

One way to reduce flight anxiety for trans and gender variant air passengers, particularly those who are transitioning, is to travel with a letter from a physician or therapist on official letterhead explaining that you are undergoing physical transition under their care. Include their contact information in case questions arise. Additionally, if you are traveling with transition-related medical supplies—such as prescription hormones, syringes, dilators, or prosthetics—it is helpful to list those supplies as medical necessities in the letter or keep medical devices in their pharmacy packaging that includes a prescription label. Be prepared to briefly explain the purpose of the item if asked. **While such a letter may not resolve all possible issues that may come up during travel, it may offer a layer of security to the person carrying it.**

## UPDATED: ID SCREENING REGULATIONS

In 2011 the Aeronautics Act was updated with new **ID screening regulations** that particularly affect trans and gender variant airline passengers. These updated regulations read, in part (emphasis added):

5.2 (1) An air carrier shall not transport a passenger if

- (a) the passenger presents a piece of photo identification and does not resemble the photograph;
- (b) the passenger does not appear to be the age indicated by the date of birth on the identification he or she presents;
- (c) the passenger does not appear to be of the gender indicated on the identification he or she presents; or
- (d) the passenger presents more than one form of identification and there is a major discrepancy between those forms of identification.

(2) Despite paragraph (1)(a), an air carrier may transport a passenger who presents a piece of photo identification but does not resemble the photograph if

- (a) the passenger's appearance changed for medical reasons after the photograph was taken and the passenger presents the air carrier with a document signed by a health care professional and attesting to that fact; or
- (b) the passenger's face is bandaged for medical reasons and the passenger presents the air carrier with a document signed by a health care professional and attesting to that fact.

While these new regulations could present a barrier to a passengers whose gender marker on government identification does not match their gender expression, presenting a letter from a healthcare professional (a physician or a therapist) explaining the difference may enable the passenger to travel.

## b. Acceptable Forms of Identification

The chart below outlines acceptable forms of identification for air travellers and is intended for use by Canadian citizens, permanent residents, and other legal residents of Canada.

While the chart outlines acceptable forms of ID, please be aware that some requirements may vary and some forms of ID may require you to present a secondary piece of ID as a backup.

Egale Canada Human Rights Trust (ECHRT) is Canada's only national charity promoting LGBT human rights through research, education and community engagement.

Where You're Flying	ID Requirements	Acceptable Forms of ID	Where to Obtain Selected ID
<p>Flights to, from, or within Canada</p>	<p><b>One piece*</b> of valid government-issued identification that includes your photograph, name, date of birth, and gender</p> <p>OR</p> <p><b>Two pieces*</b> of valid government-issued identification, <i>at least one of which shows your name, date of birth, and gender.</i></p>	<p>Passport</p> <p>Citizenship card</p> <p>Permanent Resident Card</p> <p>Driver's License</p> <p>Provincial Health Card</p> <p>Provincial Identity Card</p> <p>Provincial or Territorial Government Identification Cards (GICs)</p> <p>Birth Certificate</p> <p>Record of Landing Form/Confirmation of Permanent Residence (IMM 5292)</p> <p>Immigration Documents: issued to foreign nationals (e.g., Work Permit, Study Permit, Visitor Record, Temporary Resident Permit, Refugee Approved Status)</p> <p>Canadian Military Identification</p> <p>Federal Police Identification</p> <p>Federal, Provincial or Municipal Government</p>	<p><b>Passport:</b> <a href="#">Passport Canada</a></p> <p><b>Citizenship or Permanent Residence Card:</b> <a href="#">Citizenship &amp; Immigration Canada</a></p> <p><b>Driver's License:</b> <a href="#">varies by province/territory</a></p> <p><b>Provincial Health Card:</b> <a href="#">varies by province/territory</a></p> <p>Provincial or Territorial Government Identification Cards (GICs): <a href="#">varies by province/territory</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Alberta</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">British Columbia</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Manitoba</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">New Brunswick</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Newfoundland &amp; Labrador</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Nova Scotia</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Ontario</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Prince Edward Island</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Quebec:</a> not offered as of Nov. 2013</li> <li>• <a href="#">Saskatchewan</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Northwest Territories</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Nunavut</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Yukon</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Birth certificate:</b> <a href="#">varies by province/territory</a></p> <p><b>Immigration Documents:</b> <a href="#">Citizenship &amp; Immigration Canada</a> (student visa/permit, work visa/permit, etc.):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Study visa</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Work visa</a></li> </ul>

Where You're Flying	ID Requirements	Acceptable Forms of ID	Where to Obtain Selected ID
		Employee Identification Cards  Old Age Security (OAS) Identification Card  Certificate of Indian Status (Status Card): issued by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC)  Canada Border Services Agency NEXUS card  Firearms License	
International Flights	A valid passport for all passengers, including children	A valid passport for all passengers, including children	<b>Passport: <a href="#">Passport Canada</a></b>

## 2. Security Screening

Once you obtain your boarding pass from the kiosk or ticketing agent, you will proceed to the security checkpoint. Clear signage should provide directions for the screening procedure, but the following general outline is offered to help explain what to expect.

### a. Security Checkpoint: Metal Detectors

Most airports require that you remove your shoes and coat and place them, along with your carry-on luggage, in provided bins on the x-ray machine conveyor belt. You will likely be asked to empty your pockets of change and anything metallic, show your boarding pass to a security agent, and then walk through a standing metal detector. If the detector goes off, you may be asked to pass through the machine once more, or a security officer may take you aside and use a hand-held metal detector to screen you more carefully. If that does not identify the anomaly, you may be asked to undergo further screening such as a full-body scan or physical search.

Metal detectors can be set off by jewellery, metal-boned corsets, underwire bras, metal binding materials, and some shoes. Try to avoid wearing metal-containing underwear or piercings when flying.

If nothing is flagged by the content of your carry-ons or when you walk through the metal detector, you should be allowed to gather your belongings and proceed to your gate. However, some passengers are randomly selected for further screening, and passengers who set off the metal detector or whose luggage contains anomalies that cannot be explained may also be required to undergo further screening, such as full-body scanners and/or physical searches.

## b. Security Checkpoint: Explosive Trace Detection (ETD)

In Canada, **ETD technology** is used in airports on a random basis. Security officers may swab your hands, the clothing by your waist, your socks, shoes or your carry-on baggage and then use ETD technology to test for explosives.

## c. Security Checkpoint: Full-Body Scanners (Advanced Imaging Technology)

Some passengers are randomly selected for extra security screening, which can include full-body scans and/or physical searches. Full-body scanners are capable of detecting metallic and non-metallic weapons, standard and home-made explosives (sheet and bulk), liquids, gels, plastics, powders, metals, ceramics, other solids, etc.

If your airport offers the option of going through a full-body scanner and you prefer not to, you have the right to request a physical search instead. If you choose the full-body scan and the test reveals anomalies, the security officers will take you aside for a physical search.

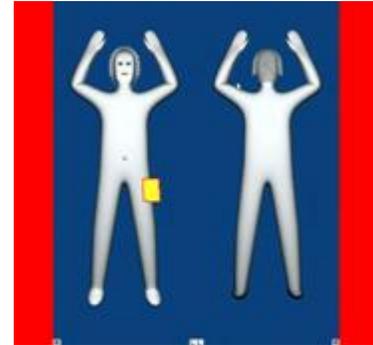
## LUGGAGE SAFETY

- Because of U.S. carry-on restrictions, which may be adopted in other countries, keeping all of your luggage with you has become impossible. Since it is important to declare any potentially prohibited items in your checked luggage, you may wish to request to have your luggage privately screened if you are carrying items or clothing you do not want revealed in public.
- Medication and medical equipment **MUST** be declared when passing through customs (for international travel). If you need to carry these supplies onto the plane, keep them in a carry-on bag and consider requesting a private inspection. If possible, it is advisable to carry appropriate prescriptions and keep medical equipment in their pharmacy boxes that include prescription labels.
- Since all luggage will be searched or scanned, with all contents subject to confiscation by airport security, it is best to keep your luggage contents to the minimum of what you require for your trip in order to avoid potential issues or harassment when going through security checkpoints.

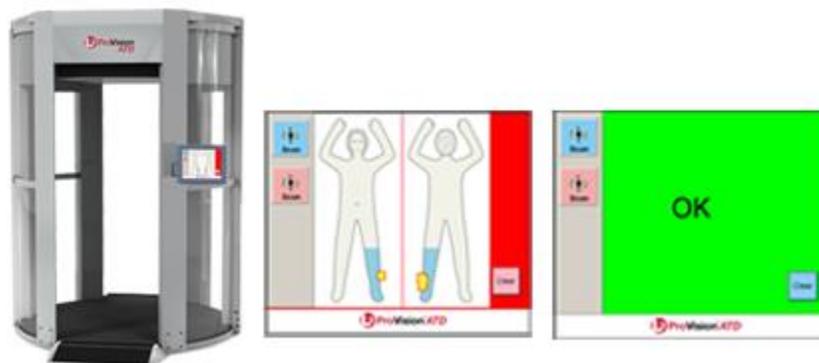
Always remember that your luggage may be lost or delayed: keep any hormones or medication you will need within 24 hours of your arrival in your carry-on luggage.

## Old Full-Body Scanners vs. New Full-Body Scanners

When full-body scanners were introduced into the airport safety screening procedure, some machines were designed to reveal intimate contours of individual travellers' bodies. However, the [Canadian Air Transportation Security Authority \(CATSA\)](#) reports that the units now in use generate "an image that has **no identifying features**, and largely resembles a generic 'stick' figure instead of a skeleton-type image...**the new images are immediately and permanently deleted after they are viewed** [and] there are no longer privacy concerns." Areas of concern are indicated with a highlighted box: the image to the right illustrates this generic type of scan.



In the U.S., the [Transportation Safety Authority \(TSA\)](#) similarly reports that the full-body scanners currently in use "are outfitted with software designed to **enhance passenger privacy by eliminating passenger-specific images** and instead...highlighting [potential threats] on a **generic outline of a passenger that is identical for all passengers.**" The images to below provide another example of a generic scan.



## d. Security Checkpoint: Physical Search

Physical search procedures will generally be required for passengers who decline a full-body image scan, set off a metal detector, or are randomly selected for additional screening.

The CATSA physical search protocol is generally triggered for one of two reasons:

1. Metal detector alarm: if the metal detector alarm goes off when you pass through and the source cannot be found through repeated walk-throughs or with a hand-held metal detector, you will be required to undergo a physical search to identify and assess the source of the alarm.
2. Random selection: if you are flagged during the random selection process you will be required to undergo either a physical search or a full body scan (where available). Selection is automatic and random to ensure that all passengers have an equal likelihood of being chosen.

## What to Expect During a *Physical Search*:

The CATSA website explains that the following may be included in a physical search:

- Visual search: the screening officer may visually inspect the passenger without touching to look for unusual objects on the person
- Physical search: the screening officer may use their hands to feel for possible items concealed under a passenger's clothing
  - Security officers will ask if you prefer to have the search performed in semi-public view (a private search stall, where available) or in a private search room. Private search stalls are generally located just off the security checkpoint, if the airport provides the option. All airports reserve a private search room for the purposes of passenger security screening. Remember to carry your personal belongings with you when you are moving to the search area!
    - If you are traveling with a companion, you may request that they accompany you for the screening.
    - If you are traveling alone and feel concerned for your safety, being searched in a semi-public search stall may be a safer option than being searched in a private search room.
- You will be accompanied by two security officers, one to perform the search and one to serve as a witness. CATSA's policies specify that both must be the same gender as you are currently presenting. Based on your own comfort level, decide which gender you prefer your inspectors to be, and communicate this clearly and respectfully to airport personnel.
  - While there is no nationwide provision for trans or gender variant air passengers to request a "split search" (one male and one female security officer to accompany you, with each searching different sections of your body), a human rights precedent has been set in Ontario:
    - Based on the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario's ruling in the case of *Forrester vs. Peel (Regional Municipality) Police Services Board*, police services are recommended to provide the option of split searches for trans detainees.
  - If you are required to undergo a physical search in an Ontario airport, you may attempt to request a split search and, if necessary, refer to the case above. However, please keep in mind that there is no legal requirement for airport personnel to comply.
- The physical search itself is typically performed over your clothing and is done as a precautionary measure to determine any areas of concern. At times, it may be necessary for a screening officer to move, shift or slightly lift your clothing to finalize the search.
  - Security officers are required to wear gloves during the physical search. You may request that the officer change gloves before performing your search.
- If you have a disability or medical condition that may impact the screening process, CATSA encourages you to let the screening officer know before beginning. Explain your needs and don't hesitate to ask for assistance. If you have a disability, medical condition, or implant (like a pacemaker or insulin pump) that you would like to remain private and confidential, please ask the screening officer to be discreet.
  - [Learn more about provisions for passengers with disabilities or medical needs here.](#)
  - [CATSA provides a video explaining the physical search process here.](#)

### 3. International Travel

#### a. Safety at Your Point of Arrival

For your personal security, it is important to keep in mind the social and legal attitudes toward trans people at your point of arrival. Heightened security measures mean that you – and all travellers – will be more carefully scrutinized, possibly jeopardizing your safety at your destination. For information about trans rights around the world, please consult the [International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association \(ILGA\)](#).

#### b. Security Screening Information at U.S. Airports

For information on security screening at U.S. Airports, please visit the [Transportation Security Information's website for traveller information here](#).

### 4. Mistreatment and Inappropriate Behaviour

If at any time during check-in or the security screening process you feel that you are being treated in an inappropriate or discriminatory manner, you may ask to speak to a supervisor immediately. Additionally, feedback forms are available from security. Please report misconduct and negative experiences – or positive experiences! – to authorities in order to improve the system for everyone.